

## TIMEOUT WITH 4.05

## [TRES MARTIN]

Few elective courses are as worthwhile as the class Tres Martin is teaching. The 41-year-old offshore racer launched a high-performance boat-operating school over concerns that boat owners don't know how to run their boats properly. For \$2,500 students get one day of classroom instruction and another half-day on the water running a boat under varying conditions. So far a dozen students have taken part. Martin has been driving boats since he was a youth, and as a throttleman, has won multiple national and world championships. He owns Martin Offshore Custom Marine in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., a full-service business that rigs, restores and services high-performance boats. We caught up with Martin by phone at his office. —GREGG MANSFIELD

**PB: What is your core business?**

**TM:** Our core business for a long time has been customizing boats, building custom boats for customers. We're rigging the Dragon Powerboats now. In this last year I really got put in a situation with several customers where I had to be a passenger in their boat and it just came to light that these people didn't know how to drive these boats. These were boats that were sold by other dealers.

I went for a ride, and I was just shocked that these people didn't have any clue. Over the last year, I've seen so many boat accidents and so many turned-over boats that it's going to really hurt our industry soon if somebody doesn't step up to the plate.

I decided I needed to take my knowledge to the public. And I need to teach these people that these boats—and the speeds they operate them at today—(require) a considerable amount of care and things that need to be used.

**PB: What qualifies you to teach this school?**

**TM:** I probably work with some of the hardest boats to operate in some of the hardest conditions. I've spent a lot of time doing research and development on the turning and the attitude, and the design of some of these twin-step hulls.

There have been days where I've taken certain boats and gone out there at certain speeds and put them right to the edge, to find out where the edge is and come back out of it.

And everything is taken into account—I weigh the boat, I know what the drive heights are and I know what the bottom design is. You have to go out there and do this. You have to put a boat to the test to find out where it is. I think that is one of the things that gives me a bit of an upper hand on this. As far as the cats, I've been doing quite a few of the rats for quite a while. I think more people get in trouble with the cats at very high speed than in the normal turning process.

**PB: Where do you teach the classes?**

**TM:** Right now, it can go any way they want it. I can go out to certain groups. Certain people have already come here to do the class and we're going to be doing the class in a lake up in north Orlando, Fla., so it's a little closer for a lot of people and they don't have to travel as far. We do supply the boat to do it or they can bring their own boat. On some of these big cats, people are more than likely going to want to bring their boat and do it themselves. I think more people have walked out of the classroom on the first day and say, "Wow I just didn't know that," and this is before we hit the water.

## When ordering your next boat or re-rigging

**PB:** Who do you think should take this class?

**TM:** Anybody who is going to have a boat that is capable of reaching speeds of 75-plus, that does have a stepped-bottom (boat) or a catamaran, anything that uses a lifting mechanism to get that boat to run faster.

**PB:** What do you hope students will gain from the school?

**TM:** I want to give them confidence. I want them to know the right settings on their boat for every water condition. That's one of the things I teach everybody. There is a setting for every condition. Getting to know your boat, where your weight is in your boat and getting to know your bottom design.

The other thing a lot of people have missed the boat on are all the safety issues. They've overlooked that. How their fire extinguishers may be out of date. Some can't be removed from the holders because they're corroded in.

The proper life jackets that they need to wear. This is something very important most people don't realize. And teaching people how to properly get out of their boat if they're put in a situation where their boat is overturned—where to go. Some people don't know any better. They might try to swim down the deck or they might swim

into the cabin of the boat. With the proper life jacket on, you may be saving your own life. This class is geared to helping the owner of the boat save the occupants' lives and his own.

**PB:** What has been the response to the school?

**TM:** Right now, a lot of people aren't sure they need to take it. A lot of people say, "I've already been running my boat for a year. I know how to run my boat." Right now, I've been working with the insurance companies and that's where I'm trying to get most of my boost from, trying to get people to get some kind of discount for taking the class. It's just going to take getting people through the class and maybe seeing the results, that these people walk away having the knowledge they did not have before they went into the classroom.

**PB:** What are some misconceptions about stepped-bottom boats?

**TM:** I think a lot of people get in these boats and they think they feel good. Most people are out there operating this boat and they say the same thing, "It feels fine," when they actually don't know how close they are to being ejected from the boat or having the boat spin out.

I know because I've put these boats through

the rigors already. I've put them where they're almost turned over completely and still get out of them. It's one of the things I teach in the classes. If you are getting in trouble, I'm going to show you how to get out of trouble, but I don't want you to ever get that close in the first place.

**PB:** Have you been in an accident?

**TM:** I've been in a fire, yes I have.

**PB:** What did you learn from those?

**TM:** Hitting the water at any kind of speed doesn't feel very good, and I realized that I could have been dead, but I was lucky enough to live.

**PB:** Do we call you professor?

**TM:** I don't think you need to call me professor. I'm just an average guy. My biggest goal right now is to make sure that what happens to the small boating industry doesn't turn out like the prop plane industry did years ago where the insurance is going to kill it.

It's not for my gain. It's so everybody who's in this industry still has a job in the years to come. I think it's going to save a lot of lives and maybe stop a lot of insurance claims as well. ☺

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